

Patrick Reed



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WEATHER



Thomas Horvath, first grade,
The Basilica School

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TROPICAL WEATHER

Matthew threatens

City to vote on parking rate hike

BY SCOTT UNGER
Key West Citizen

The Key West City Commission will vote on a \$1-per-hour parking rate hike to provide for affordable housing and future public transit options at its meeting Tuesday.

Revenue generated by the hike will be split among three funds.

The affordable housing trust fund — which provides funding for city acquisitions as well as aid to developers and home buyers seeking affordable projects — will receive 40 percent, with 33 percent going to the gas tax fund for the “study and implementation of alternative transportation methods,” and the remaining 27 percent to the city’s general fund, according to the resolution.

A downtown circular shuttle and other alternative options are possibilities for the extra funds, according to Key West Planning Director Thaddeus Cohen.

If approved, three free shuttles would run 20 minute routes from the park and ride location on

Caroline Street to the streets surrounding Duval Street, with an additional peak bus running seven days a week from 5 to 8 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m., Cohen said.

From December through April, the three buses would run from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday through

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Parking

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Thursday and 10 a.m. to midnight on Friday and Saturday. During the remaining months, the buses would only run on weekends, Cohen said.

By instituting the shuttles soon, the city will be able to show funding to obtain a \$750,000 matching grant from the Florida Department of Transportation by 2020, Cohen said.

“We’re hopeful that if this is passed, we will have the revenues to be able to fund the system and then in 2020, obtain the grant funding,” he said. “It’s the first step in trying to reduce car usage and congestion on Duval.”

City staff would like to implement the shuttle system by December. The buses will provide Old Town access to workers, residents and tourists, Cohen said.

“We are not looking at it in terms of workers or tourists,” he said. “We’re trying to get people from where they are to where they need to go.”

The additional revenue will also be used for other forms of alternative transportation, according to Commissioner Jimmy Weekley, who sponsored the resolution.

“We’re also looking at things like a bike sharing program, a zipcar type of thing and improving bicycle routes around the city,” Weekley said.

Parking revenue is currently divided between the general fund and the city’s transit system and all revenues from the Key West Bight District go to the Bight fund, according to Parking Director John Wilkins.

Parking rates currently vary, with street parking at \$2 per hour, Mallory Square at \$4 per hour and Bight

parking at \$2.50 per hour, Wilkins said.

The increase would be in line with parking pricing in comparative areas around the state, according to Wilkins.

“I did a sampling of South Florida and in my opinion Miami Beach most accurately compares with Key West and the parking ranges from \$3 to \$4 (per hour),” he said. “Other cities ... varied, some of them are as low as 50 cents an hour and others were \$3 an hour.”

If approved by the commission, the new rates will be implemented in a matter of weeks. The city will need time to make minor adjustments such as reprogramming parking machines and printing new stickers, according to Wilkins.

The commission will vote on the matter at its regular meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Old City hall.

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